

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An absorbent article having a longitudinal center line and a lateral centerline, an inner surface and a garment facing surface, comprising:
 - a containment assembly having a rear waist region, a crotch region, a front waist region, a pair of longitudinal edges, a body facing surface and a garment facing surface opposite to the body facing surface, the containment assembly comprising a topsheet, a backsheet joined to the topsheet, an absorbent core positioned between the topsheet and the backsheet, and a pair of barrier leg cuffs having a proximal edge and a distal edge and being positioned adjacent to the longitudinal edges of the containment assembly;
 - a pair of rear ear panels extending laterally outwardly from the proximal edges of the barrier leg cuff in the rear waist region;
 - a pair of front ear panels extending laterally outwardly from the proximal edges of the barrier leg cuff in the front waist region; and
 - a reinforcement nonwoven joined ~~immediately adjacent~~ to an inner-facing surface of the backsheet and to at least one of either the garment facing surface of the rear ear panels or the garment facing surface of the front ear panels so as to form a portion of the garment facing surface of the absorbent article, the reinforcement nonwoven not substantially overlapping the containment assembly wherein the reinforcement nonwoven does not extend the entire longitudinal length of the absorbent article.
2. (Canceled)
3. (Previously Presented) The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein the rear ear panels comprise extensions of the barrier leg cuffs in the rear waist region.
4. (Original) The article of claim 3 wherein the front ear panels comprise extensions of the barrier leg cuff in the front waist region.
5. (Original) The absorbent article of claim 4 wherein the reinforcement nonwoven is joined to both the rear ear panels and the front ear panels.

6. (Currently Amended) The absorbent article of claim [[5]] 1 wherein the reinforcement nonwoven further comprises a strip which is joined to the longitudinal edges of the containment assembly in the crotch region.
7. (Original) The absorbent article of claim 6 wherein the reinforcement nonwoven and the strip are a continuous piece of material.
8. (Original) The absorbent article of claim 7 wherein the reinforcement nonwoven has a proximal edge, the proximal edge of the reinforcement nonwoven being joined to the barrier leg cuff between the backsheet and the barrier leg cuff.
9. (Original) The absorbent article of claim 8 wherein the strip has a distal edge that extends more distally outward from the longitudinal centerline than the proximal edge of the barrier leg cuff.
10. (Previously Presented) The absorbent article of claim 9 wherein both of the barrier leg cuffs and the reinforcement nonwoven comprise a hydrophobic nonwoven material.
11. (Currently Amended) An absorbent article having a longitudinal center line and a lateral centerline, an inner surface and a garment facing surface, comprising:
 - a containment assembly having a rear waist region, a crotch region, a front waist region, a pair of longitudinal edges, a body facing surface and a garment facing surface opposite to the body facing surface, the containment assembly comprising a topsheet, a ~~backsheet~~ backsheet joined to the topsheet, an absorbent core positioned between the topsheet and the backsheet, and a pair of barrier leg cuffs having a proximal edge and a distal edge and being positioned adjacent to the longitudinal edges of the containment assembly;
 - a pair of rear ear panels extending laterally outwardly from the proximal edges of the barrier leg cuff in the rear waist region;
 - a pair of front ear panels extending laterally outwardly from the proximal edges of the barrier leg cuff in the front waist region; and
 - a reinforcement nonwoven joined ~~immediately adjacent~~ to an inner-facing surface of the backsheet and to at least one of either the garment facing surface of the rear ear panels or the garment facing surface of the front ear panel so as to form a portion of the garment facing surface of the absorbent article, wherein the reinforcement

nonwoven does substantially overlap the containment assembly, whereby the reinforcement nonwoven provides topsheet-like benefits.

12. (Currently Amended) An absorbent article having a longitudinal center line and a lateral centerline, an inner surface and a garment facing surface, comprising:

a containment assembly having a rear waist region, a crotch region, a front waist region, a pair of longitudinal edges, a body facing surface and a garment facing surface opposite to the body facing surface, the containment assembly comprising a topsheet, a backsheet joined to the topsheet, an absorbent core positioned between the topsheet and the backsheet, and a pair of barrier leg cuffs having a proximal edge and a distal edge and being positioned adjacent to the longitudinal edges of the containment assembly;

a pair of rear ear panels extending laterally outwardly from the proximal edges of the barrier leg cuff in the rear waist region;

a pair of front ear panels extending laterally outwardly from the proximal edges of the barrier leg cuff in the front waist region; and

a reinforcement nonwoven joined ~~immediately adjacent~~ to an inner-facing surface of the backsheet and to at least one of either the garment facing surface of the rear ear panels or the garment facing surface of the front ear panels so as to form a portion of the garment facing surface of the absorbent article, the reinforcement nonwoven not substantially overlapping the containment assembly, the reinforcement nonwoven having a tensile strength of at least 80 gf/cm in the traverse direction of the absorbent article.